

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

POLICY

ADOPTED: 5/81

REVISED: 6/94

REVISED: 6/97

SUBJECT:

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND SERVICE

Recognizing that educational quality is enhanced by a dynamic partnership among school, home, and community, all California schools, public and private, are strongly encouraged to develop opportunities for students to participate in community service programs linked to the curriculum, as well as to promote student participation in those programs through appropriate recognition and reward. In this way, positive relationships between schools and communities will be enhanced, and the lifelong commitment of students to community service will be fostered.

Toward that end, the State Board of Education recognizes that, under existing law, the governing boards of all school districts may include community service within their prescribed courses of study and, in the case of high school and unified school districts, may actually require coursework that includes community service as a condition for receiving a high school diploma. [See Education Code Sections 51210(h), 51220(k), and 51225.3(a)(2).]

The United States of America is founded upon a tradition of active citizen involvement and participation in civic and community affairs, and all educators recognize the essential role of schools in ensuring that this valued tradition flourishes.

Learning through community service contributes to the development of character, values, self-esteem, responsibility, and knowledge of important local issues and concerns. Youth participation in responsible and meaningful community service experiences enhances leadership abilities, creativity, and cooperative learning and provides a foundation for every student to experience success as a member of the community. Community service also helps ensure the optimal use of human and financial resources through coordination of effort by governmental agencies, businesses and industries, human service organization, and civic organizations in local areas. Community service contributes to a sense of community pride and “ownership” among students, thus strengthening their collective sense of safety and lessening the potential for violence and vandalism.

Community service appropriate for students includes, but is not limited to, tutoring, peer counseling, providing companionship to the elderly, volunteering in hospitals and charitable agencies, beautifying surroundings, environmental improvement and enhancement, participation in the electoral process, assisting at food banks and homeless shelters, and being aides in organized child care and development activities. A comprehensive school-based community service program offers a wide range of opportunities for student participation.

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Effective school-based community service programs clearly articulate service and learning goals. They are anchored in the curriculum, showing students the relationship between what they are learning with what they are experiencing. These programs provide opportunities to make decisions, build teamwork and cooperation, encourage participation by and among diverse populations, and ensure systematic opportunities for reflection.

Effective school-based community service programs require the commitment of students and their families and of all adults at the school-faculty, support staff, and volunteers-and in the community-particularly representatives of governmental agencies, civic and community organizations, businesses and industries.